# Vintage Love

Lisa Chen

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# EDITOR

My name is Lisa Chen, and I am really excited for you to read my zine!

All of the stickers on the borders are ones that I have collected over the years.

# From the desk of the editor

Welcome to Vintage Love! This zine is an ode to all of the beautiful knick-knacks in my home. It represents a minimalist nightmare and a collector's dream.

This zine was inspired by an essay I wrote for NYUs AAPI magazine Generasian. (Shoutout to them!) In my essay, Vintage Love, I wanted to explore the relationship with my mother and her love of garage sales. While writing, I was in a bit of a funk and wasn't very happy with my final submission. When thinking about ideas to submit to Buildspace's nights + weekends, an incubator for passion projects, I revisited this essay. I knew I wanted to challenge myself to turn this essay into something that I could be proud of, so in a way "thrifting" an idea.

When I was younger, one of my favorite programs was Antique Roadshow on PBS. I was a voracious learner and loved learning about the history of items but also how the participants found the items always fascinated me. I also want this to be my message on the current state of thrifting and secondhand in 2024, because it has become a sport. We are blinded by the cheap price tags and our desire for more, but most importantly we have forgotten how to love our items.

It is time to revisit these objects and for me to retell these stories. Some of these stories may cause you to shed tears or crack up. I want it to be a collection of moments that capture the personality of my family and how that has shaped me into the person I am today.

While some may gawk at these items, and believe it excessive, this was not an overnight accumulation. It was the result of many years, of various gifts, donations, and deals that led to our ultimate collections. Many collectors on the other hand dream of having such an extensive catalog of items someday.

Lastly, if this is in your hands, I wanted to let you know that I have written an intro like this countless times in the past, and I hope it has met your eyes and not locked away in my Google Docs folder. This project in whatever form whether digital or physical has been delayed for quite some time. I hope your interest is piqued. So it is time I open this treasure chest and let you in!

Treat with care and while reading, I hope you fall in love with your childhood no matter how different we may be.

Happy Reading!

# THEN:

When I was a kid, I was an enthusiastic soccer player. I religiously played soccer every Saturday morning in the Spring and Fall. After many games, my mom would whisk me away and drive me around to hunt for garage sale deals.

Some weekends our hauls would be amazing, and other weekends were rubbish. I never felt weird about going to garage sales or buying other people's possessions, even wearing secondhand clothes rarely fazed me. I could see the glitter in my mom's eyes when she found something that would last the test of time, and she was right. We still use many of those garage sale items! To me, everything I owned had so much history and love that I couldn't help but feel grateful that they found their way to our family.

Despite the impending finality of these items, I know they played a big part in cultivating my endless childhood memories, and I am grateful for that.

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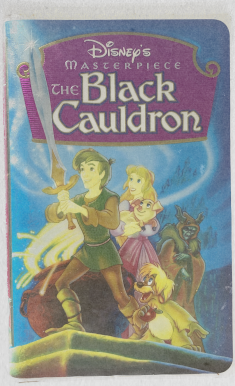
# Match the numbers with the toys in the picture

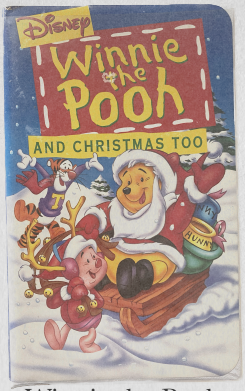
6

7

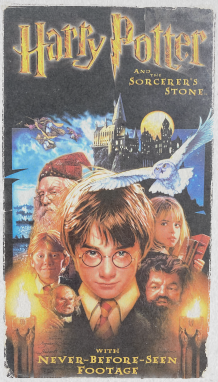
8




The Black Cauldron



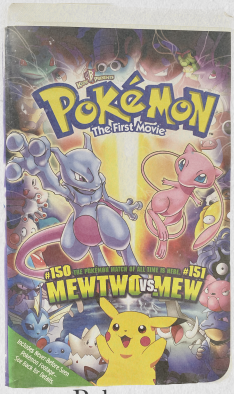

Winnie the Pooh
And Christmas Too



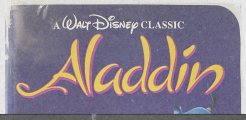

Harry Potter

The Wizard of Oz

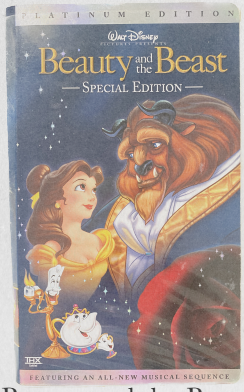
Prince of Egypt



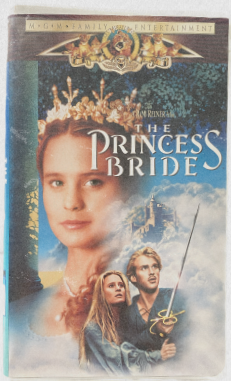

Pokemon
The First Movie



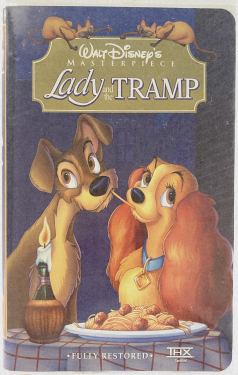
# VHS:



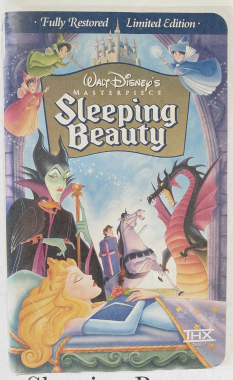

Beauty and the Beast



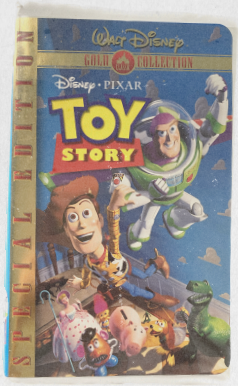

The Princess Bride



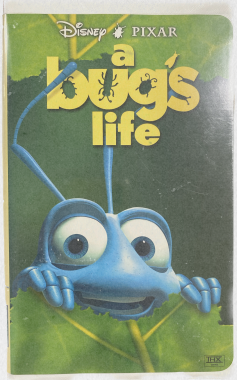

Lady and the Tramp




Sleeping Beauty




Toy Story



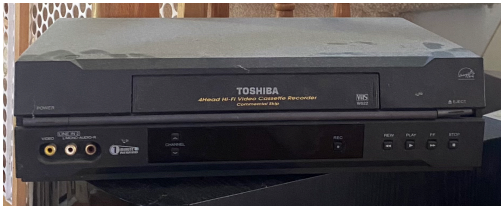

A Bugs Life

# Be Kind Rewind

# Home Theater

Before DVDs there were VHS'.

After school, instead of going to Kumon or extracurriculars like other students in my area, I watched VHS tapes. I would pop in one of those large cassette tapes in the trusty old VHS player. Blowing off the dust and crossing my fingers that the old machine would work. As I held the power button down, I heard the low whirring and saw the familiar green light signaling that it was ready. The best part of it all was picking which one to watch. Sliding through 100+ titles on my bookshelf, I had a hard decision ahead of me. I could watch Mulan fighting the Han, Ariel singing her way to love, Hercules proving his worth to Zeus, or the Prince defeating Maleficent in Dragon form. All of these classics with a run time of less than two hours are right at my fingertips.




When I made my choice, I would run over and pop it into the player. As I anticipate the title scene, I instead see the credits rolling, someone didn't rewind this properly. I patiently rewind it and partially close my eyes to skip any major spoilers, even though I had watched it so many times. Now it laid before me, the title scene:  Swan Princess III. This was one of those movies that only I watched, I guess my siblings didn't like Swan Princess.

Other times, my two older sisters and I  would watch movies together. They had been watching VHS daily for years and they were seasoned veterans. Even though I knew all the plot points, they knew the movie scripts by heart and every song in the movie. Movies like Hunchback of Notre Dame soon became a Broadway show and line-by-line readings, without subtitles, of Mulan, ensued. During long holidays, we would divide parts, and act the songs out. From emulating the Muses gospel choir in Hercules to romantic duets in Aladdin to powerful solos in the Little Mermaid, we did them all. It was not just about memorization but the performance, we would clear the floor like in a dance battle and pour our hearts out. If the character was in battle we would joust each other or when a character was fainting, we would fall dramatically.

Our show although off-key was cinematic, and if you see me in person please don't ask me to sing them on the spot.

My parents thoroughly enjoyed all of this as they continued to buy VHS tapes, my mom and her forgetfulness would regularly pick up titles we already had. Now we own 2 copies of Aladdin's Prince of Thieves and doubles of other odd titles like many of Winnie the Pooh's straight-to-VHS specials. Even though we owned many classics, we also owned their poorly rated counterparts. If you thought Disney's live-action campaign was bad,  I hope you never had to experience the era of the animated sequels.

Even though we had access to streaming, the internet, and CDS, I still watched the VHS for a long time afterward. My favorite times to watch VHS were when I would get sick and get to skip school. While eating my large bowl of Maruchan Ramen, I would play my all-time favorite The Sound of Music. The movie is three hours long and is set in the 1930s following the Von Trapps during their time in Nazi-Occupied Austria. It starred Julie Andrews and Christopher Walken, and it was a gorgeous movie set in the hills of the Austrian Countryside and the city of Salzburg. Between the green grass and fun songs, I slowly forgot I was sick. My unbearable cough and an endless tissue mountain were a distant thought. Ultimately I did get to visit Salzburg, and I can confirm that it is just as beautiful as in the movies.

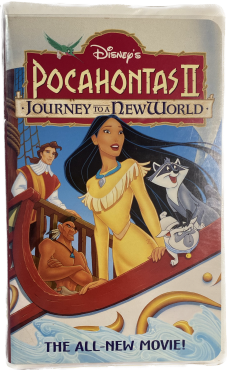
But that will be a story for another time.

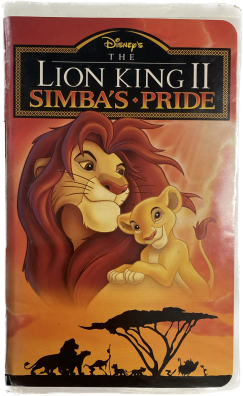
# Am I Seeing Double?

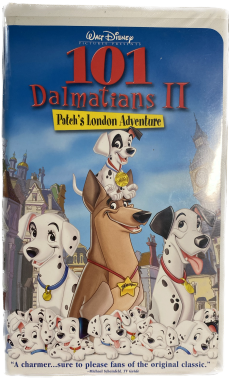
Every collector has a backup

# The Terrible 2's

## The rise of the sequels





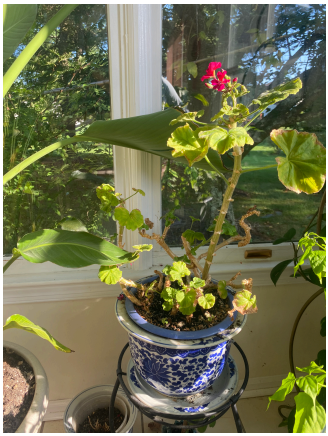



# Sunbathing

My mom has the greenest green thumb in the world. If you are anything like me, developing a green thumb is an enduring battle between killing your plant and vowing you will keep your plant alive. When the battle seems endless, there is an option to donate your plant to my mom's plant hospital. Her survival rate is almost 100%, and many plants come back unrecognizable, even to their former owners. This reputation has become a mark of pride for my mom, and she occasionally gloats about her achievements. It is baffling how she does it and makes me wonder if it is my lack of skill or her overpowered skill level. With scores of plants getting saved, we have created a mini jungle. Bathed by nearby sun rays many have resided there for as long as we have lived in the house.

My only contribution to this effort was buying a small pot of pink flowers for my Mom. I distinctly remember that on this Mother's Day, I raised my tiny gift to her and smiled shyly as I said Happy Mother's Day. From that day on,  the little pink flowers survived many many more pots and may even last a lifetime. Every time I come home my mom gives me little updates on the once tiny pink flowers and how far it has come.

Unfortunately, my mom's genes did not get passed down to me. I have routinely almost killed her plants when she goes overseas, and the arguments get heated. In my defense, I don't have the sense to know when my mom's plants need love, and there are so many of them. Now I have resorted to the "if it looks dry, then I water" motto. I think it's working better…



Despite the ups and downs, these pots and plants have largely survived. Over two decades of up keeping, repotting, sourcing, and pruning, it is a labor of love for Mom. If anything, her process has taught me patience and that there is some beauty to all of the change. There are years that I liked the sunroom better than others because my favorite plants are at their peak or the new ones are not thriving. Plants can live a long time but don't look beautiful or the same every day. I take it on as a visualization of my path and my interests.

Although I may not have inherited a green thumb, I am grateful to bask in the glory of the most beautiful plants in the world right in my own home.

# Year-round

Many of these plants have seen me grow from a small sprout into an equally tall stem. Their big leaves and shrubbery, have slowly become the backdrop and props for an iconic venue in my childhood. They have routinely provided some of the best lighting for photoshoots and videos. Whether it was various dance practice videos that I keep down in the archive, random photoshoots with my dog, or the background of High School election videos, the sunroom is no stranger to the big screen.

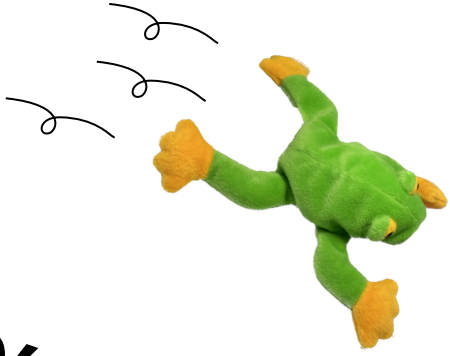
But the shining moments were on my birthday, being born in the winter meant that it was too cold to go outside to do any backyard activities. So, we had to keep everyone inside, and soon, the sunroom became the hottest venue among my friends. In 4th grade, I had a magazine high fashion-themed birthday party with a photoshoot. While I had my most legendary birthday party in 5th grade, a Harry Potter-themed one. We got sorted into houses and ate in the "great hall" which was the sunroom. My sister dressed up as Professor Snape to add intrigue, my other sister was McGonagall, and I was sorted into Gryffindor. We had point charts, modified quidditch, and a wand/chopstick-choosing ceremony.

It really has seen a lot of crazy moments like my botched 5th grade science fair

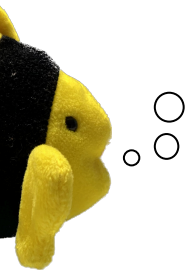
project when we created soap bars. At the time we thought we were the coolest people in town with our horrendous-looking blue soap bars. Not only was it horrendous but I added Bath & Body Works hand sanitizer to enhance the smell of our product which ended up conflating our results. It was a mess. We stained my dinner table and the microwave exploded. Then in 8th grade, we hosted a graduation dinner and had an all-out water balloon fight in my backyard. It was funny seeing my friends pelted with water balloons, some began to climb trees, others hid in bushes and the techniques were nasty. I think there were a good amount of scraped knees after that.

Despite all the past craziness, it has quieted down. Various family members routinely falls asleep in the comfort of a pale yellow rocking chair. While our dog likes to hop on our laps as we rock and scroll through videos. Sometimes it feels like a classic American scene.

BEANI



# E BABIES, 90's favorite fad



# Collectors Ver.

When I was younger, I would watch these news segments of young kids showcasing their mass collections of items. These segments featured rocks, stamps, currency, or superhero memorabilia. As a kid, I was fascinated by all the brightly colored items dotting the screen, it felt so cool to come on TV and explain the collection you gathered. These kids my age had items from the American Revolution or notes written from various empires. I was so enamored by that type of attitude, they had a part of history. This was a big contrast to the stories my parents told me about their childhoods. They told me that when they were younger, they only dreamed of owning a teddy bear let alone having a collection. But the idea of having a collection of family heirlooms fascinated me. It felt like a shining star to have a collection of my own.

My Mom caught on, and we stumbled on the perfect item: Beanie Babies. Once a hot commodity in the 90s, it faded into obscurity. People were desperately selling their entire collection to earn some money back from their initial investments. This meant that these toys were relatively cheap when bought second-hand. Soon I had amassed a modest collection of 20-25 Beanie Babies. My friends were also impressed because they began to see piles of brightly colored toys stacked around. When my friends came over, it was a source of pride that they wouldn't have to fight over the toys. The politics between children's playtime was intense back in the day.

My crowning achievement was when I applied to exhibit my Beanie Baby collection at the local library. They had a temporary time gap and offered me a place to showcase whatever I wanted. It was an opportunity of a lifetime for a young girl like me, and I was ready. Everyone in those days went to the local library to read books and hang out. I was prepared to step up to the plate and chose all my best Beanie Babies to showcase. I brought my bag of toys and carefully posed them so they would look their best. I brushed out some of the tufts of a few of them, and before locking it up, I carefully examined all of them.

When I was ready to close the door, I looked at the little printed sign they gave me:

Lisa Chen, Beanie Baby Collection.

I knew I had made it.

I was a collector.

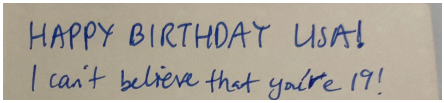
LC

Hey Lisa,
GREETINGS FROM
AUSTIN
Capitol OF TEXAS
Thinking of you
Wishing you a wonderful day!
Dear Lisa,
NOW:
LISA! — MAY 27th, 2022 —
Dear Lisa,
HELLO FROM SEATTLE
Dear Lisa,
April 21, 2021
Dear Lisa,
This note is way overdue.
cinnamoroll
Greetings From
GROVER'S MILL
NEW JERSEY

As I transitioned to college in NYC and beyond, I continued to embody a collector mindset. Instead of accumulating items to enrich myself, I have used them to help others. Before, I kept these items to display my accomplishments and found it hard to let them go when packing. Looking back that mindset felt immature but necessary to realize that I could do better.

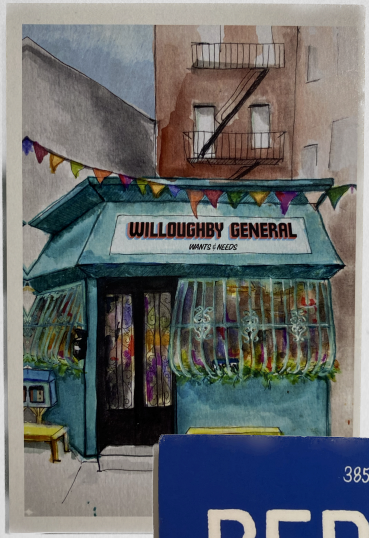
That is why I have begun to practice slowly letting go of my items and sharing them in various ways. I started sending handwritten letters to cut down on my endless stationery collection. Through this, I have reconnected with friends and gotten fun responses from the people around me. Another way is learning about film photography and taking photos of friends and family. I collect these things to make others happier and create richer experiences.

So that brings me to today, and now let's explore!




*Yes, I have kept *almost* every letter

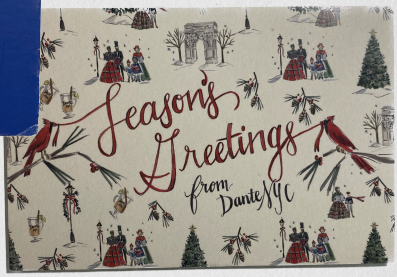
More postcards around the world,
from friends around the world.

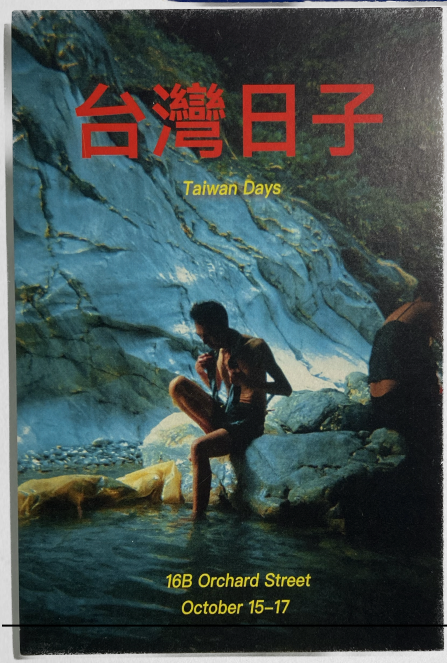


385 tompkins ave

# BED-VYNE
## WINE + SPIRITS

347.915.1080 We Deliver



**Welcome**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bienvenue | Willkommen |
| Benvenuto | 환영합니다 |
| Bienvenido | ようこそ |
| 欢迎 | Bem-vindo |
| 歡迎 | |

NYC THINCRUST.COM
SPOTMATIC
HONEYWELL
Pentax
Street life
ISH CANDY
High Li
SHIOZA
BUILDI

Connie Wang
West Village
みくじ
百 円
Yvonne
Little Island
Small World
517 W 38th
Pier 57
4/27/2022
Polaroid
600

# Captured

2019-2020, was supposed to be the freshmen year of my dreams. I had just gotten into my top school NYU, and was part of a study abroad program in Florence, Italy. It was the trip of my dreams, the bright Tuscan sun with aromatic coffee and sweet gelato, straight out of a movie. Even the rainy days were absolutely sublime. After school, my friends and I would run to the fotoautomatica, a restored vintage photo booth. One of them was next to my favorite best gelato spot in Florence, sbrino. I remember we would pile in and try to squeeze into tiny frames, while we would wait an eternity for the photos to develop only in black and white.

But those days were soon over.

The COVID pandemic began to creep in and sweep from Asia into Europe, and my study abroad program was converted online. The escape out of the country was another ordeal from a burned leg to an airport set on fire, it was pure chaos. Then I came home, and I was bored. Very bored. Apart from the horrors of the outside world, there was virtually nothing to do in our houses. Many people started to look into new hobbies and one that went viral was learning film photography. I loved the photos on Instagram and TikTok of picturesque home scenes, family dinners, and game nights. The issue for me was always the price. A college student didn't have a couple hundred dollars to spend on a nice vintage camera that didn't always work. Although in vogue, film cameras are unreliable because they are old and there is an inevitable gamble you make when buying secondhand.

By a stroke of luck, my sister happened to have a film camera that I could play around with. She found it at a flea market during her language intensive in Kyrgyzstan. Her tour guides had mentioned that during the Soviet Union's occupation of Germany, they took over many world-class camera factories. This meant that many Soviet camera brands had the same features and qualities as the German ones. The only issue was they were hard to find in the West because the cameras rarely left the Soviet Union. When my sister found hers she hoped to begin her film journey but never did. Before I left for school in New York City, I decided to rummage through other drawers in my home. Maybe I would be able to find more hidden gems. Then it appeared a Polaroid camera, and to me, that was the jackpot.

But I instantly ran into problems with both cameras. The manual Zenit from the Soviet Union was incredibly complex, and I didn't

understand the function of every button. While the Polaroid was ridiculously expensive. The first pack of 40 sheets I bought was $75 in 2021, now they are so much more than that. At the time, I didn't have a job, and when I looked at my bank account, I knew something had to change. So, I got a job as a hostess and worked 30-40 hours a week, it funded everything from food, drinks, groceries, and my growing film hobby.

As I got a little more experience with my cameras, I really leaned into my Polaroid. The beauty of Polaroids is how easy it is to use and it produces instant results. It was hard to mess up because it was pointing at the subject and clicking. The film takes care of the lighting and overall look with the mixture of chemicals on the sheet. Hence, why it is so expensive.

While living in the city, I lived alone in a shoebox apartment in NYC and took it upon myself to decorate as much as possible. I wanted to take my dingy place into something that I loved. When planning things out, I dedicated one wall to photos of my friends who visited me. At first, it was awkward trying to convince them to pose for the camera. But when they would see the photo after development, they were shocked at how good they looked, and I could feel the happiness seep through their words. As more people joined the wall, others came over a little more dressed up, and it gained a small cult following. Repeat visitors liked seeing themselves and wanted to know who else had joined the wall. Other friends who had not yet joined asked to be immortalized on the wall.

NYU students love to joke that NYU overhypes the whole "NYC is your playground" tagline. But it really is. One morning I didn't have class, and I woke up at 5 AM to hike from East Village to the Met (almost an hour away) and explore the museum at opening. I wanted to practice using my manual camera. This was my first foray into being intentional with each shot, and the pressure was on. While milling around, I felt eternally in awe of the Met and had it all to myself. I sauntered about empty rooms. Halfway through I took a small break and looked straight at George Washington Crossing the Delaware River painting in silence. It felt like a scene From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E. L. Konigsburg, a childhood classic.

From those two cameras, I have now amassed a collection of 7 cameras, and have gone through many many more rolls of film. I thought 35mm film was already popular when I started 3 years ago, but it has only gotten more popular. As borders have slowly reopened, I have had the pleasure to explore the international film community.

My growing enthusiasm has given me a hard drive full of fun pictures and boxes of 100+ Polaroids stuffed together. It is a collection of hard work and amazing memories.

# One Shot, Don't Blink

## My East Village Hall of Fame

Class Clowns

Anson + Long

Sreya K

Yvonne

2 peas in a pod

Jessica C.

Esk & Kirsten

Sophie Chen

Class of '22

Annie Shen

Ash

Dexter

Kenny B. + Nadir

Angelica G.

Jeff T.

**BEST POSE**

Serena

Chris L. & Junwoo

Michael Yu

My favorite places to shoots are:

1. West Village

2. SoHo

3. DUMBO

4. Pier 57

Where NYC lacks natural beauty, they make up gorgeous building facades. There are many good angles and streets to take movie-like photos.  Maybe it's the film or the camera, but I think it is the city. NYC is one of the main hubs where film has been gaining popularity. Many film shops sell rare cameras, stock high-quality films, and staff experts.

Favorite Film Shops + Inspo Places

1. K& M Camera
2. Dashwood Books
3. Washington Square Park

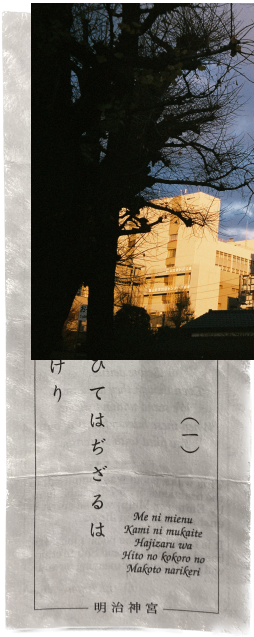
# 東京

In Tokyo, I made new friends that brought me along camera shopping and we explored vintage camera shops in the city.

## 大吉

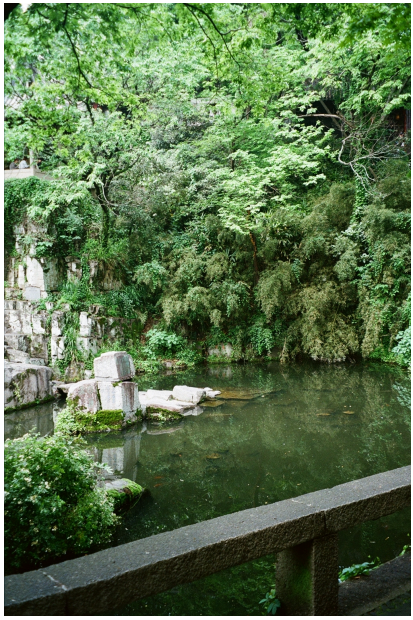
This city has a fervent film community, with Fujifilm's headquarters in a central location, and many top-tier second-hand camera vendors carrying many Japan-exclusive products. It is a great place to get one-of-a-kind and bucket list items.

Photo-wise, the storied blend of historical buildings and modern structures creates cool pictures and translates easily on camera. It is like taking photos in easy mode.



# 蘇州

In Suzhou, my college friend and I took pictures of all the cool places we traveled.



A prime example of Chinese garden philosophy that translated into gorgeous greens on film

Picturesque canals with gorgeous reflections and lush trees all around

# One-Offs: things too good to miss

Prince Charles and Lady Diana Commemorative Wedding Dinner Bell (1981)

I feel like every immigrant mother had a soft spot for Princess Diana. Her "common" background and love for children held a special place in my Mom's heart. I find this bell so indicative of the time. Watching Netflix's The Crown made me rethink this marriage and this dinner bell.

Wooden Eat Sign (2016)

This is the item that started it all. I "won" this at a *very* unfair White Elephant party. My sister detests the sign because she does not enjoy "directives" and loathes its existence. It does not help that now it permanently resides on top of the stove.

It will direct the household for as long as it needs to.

Alaska Bear-Themed Fridge Magnet (2012)

A rather forgotten family vacation to Alaska mostly remembered by the abundance of Alaska-esque souvenirs, shaky photos that I took, and lots of Subway foot-longs. The epitome of a family vacation.

Column
(2021)

I came back home from college once and was asked how would I style this column. I am unsure where this even came from but now it holds a vase of flowers.

**Anubis-inspired art project (2009)**

One of the few surviving childhood art projects now serves as a gnome.

# Now that the ink is dry...

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

This is my very first zine and encapsulates many aspects of me. I have always wanted to capture my childhood, and I am so happy that it's out in the sunlight.

I hope you enjoyed my stories and offered some food for thought on your childhood prized possessions. You don't have to be a massive collector, but I hope you give that one childhood item a big old hug!

Lastly, I hope this serves as a reminder of these items for me because I don't plan to keep them forever, and I know I will miss them.

Thank you again and until next time!

Sending Love,

Lisa Chen